

HONORING THE DISTINGUISHED
CAREER OF NISSAN'S EMIL HAS-
SAN

HON. BART GORDON

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. GORDON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the outstanding automotive career of Emil Hassan, the senior vice president of North American manufacturing, purchasing, quality and logistics at Nissan North America, Inc. Emil is retiring from Nissan on April 1 after 35 years in the automotive industry.

Emil has been credited with much of the automaker's success and profitability. He began his career with Nissan when the company built its auto manufacturing facility in Smyrna, Tennessee, in 1981. The Smyrna plant, which is located in my home county, is the largest U.S. automotive production plant under one roof and has produced more than 5 million automobiles to date. It has ranked for 9 consecutive years as the most efficient auto assembly plant in North America, according to the highly regarded annual Harbour Report.

And Emil has been an active civic leader in the hometown, as well. He is chairman of the Business/Education Partnership of Murfreesboro and Rutherford County and is a member of the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce. In fact, he received the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce Chairman's Award in 1996 for outstanding volunteer work in his home county. He has also been a director of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

I congratulate Emil for his remarkable career in the automotive industry and for all he has done to help enhance the quality of life in Rutherford County and Middle Tennessee. And I wish him the very best in his future endeavors.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I was also unavoidably absent from this Chamber on March 16, 2004. I would like the record to show that, had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on roll call votes 58, 59, and 60.

RECOGNIZING LAREDO DAY IN
WASHINGTON

HON. CIRO D. RODRIGUEZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize today, March 17, 2004, as Laredo Day in Washington. A distinguished delegation from Laredo is in our Nation's Capital this week to meet with leaders and decision-makers in Congress and executive branch. Please join me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming them.

Settled in 1775 by Spaniards, the first Texas cattle drives transformed Laredo from a settle-

ment of three families into a principal stop on the lower Camino Real, the Spanish royal highway.

Laredo became the first official port of entry on the United States-Mexico border in 1851. Today, Laredo handles more trade traffic than ports found in Southern California, New Mexico, Arizona and West Texas combined. As the fastest growing city east of the Rocky Mountains and the second fastest growing city in Texas, Laredo has become a vibrant and booming economic hub on the United States-Mexico border.

Much like it shares goods across the border, Laredo's culture melds both American and Mexican traditions. A prime example of this cultural fusion is Laredo's famed Washington's Birthday Celebration. The event includes over 34 events, lasts 17 days and brings together Americans and Mexicans alike. One event, the International Bridge Ceremony, takes place on the Lincoln-Juarez bridge and includes the meeting of officials, dignitaries, and children from both sides of the border. The groups share an embrace signifying the friendship and cooperation shared between the two nations. I was privileged to participate in this event earlier this year.

Helping to foster this camaraderie is the mayor of Laredo, the Honorable Betty Flores. Elected in 1998, Mayor Flores is the first female mayor to serve Laredo. She has worked diligently to improve the quality of life for all citizens of Laredo by tirelessly promoting her city without compromising the dignity of those she serves. Among the projects she has initiated are the Colonias Improvement Project, the inauguration of the Laredo Entertainment Center, and the opening of the World Trade Bridge. Mayor Flores' leadership on the state, local and national levels has brought prestige to her city.

Laredo's importance as a trade zone and cultural center is unparalleled, and its future is bright. It is my honor to recognize this city and Laredo Day 2004.

HONORING ONE OF OUR FALLEN
HEROES

HON. LINCOLN DAVIS

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. DAVIS of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I request the honor of distinguishing Sergeant First Class Gregory Hicks. I pay tribute to this exceptional soldier, husband, and father, who tragically died near Fajullah, Iraq on board a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter.

Sergeant Hicks was assigned to Company B, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, based in Fort Hood, Texas. A recipient of the Purple Heart and Army Achievement Medal, among others, Sergeant Hicks had distinguished himself as a man of honor and integrity.

Campbell County and the Fourth Congressional District of Tennessee lost a great individual. It was with great personal joy when I heard the small community of Duff, Tennessee, where Sergeant Hicks was raised, rallied around the family in their time of need.

Accordingly, I would like to express my deepest sympathy to his wife, Melinda, his

children, Chris and Jennifer, his mother and father, Clayton and Flora, and his siblings, Sandra, Stephen and Minnie on their tremendous loss. We honor his memory here today so that they will know that we all share their loss. Sergeant Hicks was a man devoted to his family, his country, and his community.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply honored to pay tribute to the life and memory of First Sergeant Gregory Hicks. Never withholding their services in the face of war, Tennessee's citizens have always been celebrated for their wartime valor. Sergeant Hicks fought to keep his family and country safe and for that we are forever indebted. My thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of Sergeant Hicks. It is with much respect that as a member of Congress I may honor his service.

HONORING JOHN HEMPEL

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the dedication and years of hard work by Mr. John Hempel as he retires after more than thirty years of service to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mr. Hempel was appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs as the Director of the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System (VASNHS) in Las Vegas on January 14, 2001. As Director, Mr. Hempel directed the planning, organization, coordination, and control of patient care, administrative, and support operations. He was also responsible for maintaining and improving the healthcare system and VA relationships in the community.

In addition to years of service to the VA, Mr. Hempel also bravely served his country as a combat-wounded Vietnam veteran. He served as a platoon leader and executive officer with A Troop, 1st Armored Cavalry, Americal Division in South Vietnam from 1969-1970.

During his service in the Las Vegas area, Mr. Hempel was the driving force behind significant improvements in the VA health care system. As a long-time supporter of veterans in Nevada, it was a pleasure for me to work with Mr. Hempel serving veterans in Southern Nevada.

I am honored to join with all Nevadans in honoring John Hempel on his many accomplishments and wish him well in his retirement.

ELECTIONS COMING IN PUNJAB
OPPORTUNITY TO CLAIM FREE-
DOM

HON. EDOLPHUS TOWNS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, elections have been scheduled in Punjab for May 10. They are part of India's national elections. The Sikhs in Punjab must seize this opportunity. Just changing the faces accomplishes nothing. Replacing one set of oppressors with another is not an exercise in democracy; it is merely proof of the need for independence from the tyranny that is the reality of daily life in Punjab.